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DIOCESE DE DILI, TIMOR ORIENTAL
Catholic Diocese of Dili, East Timor

Gabinete – Office	Residência - Residence	Direcção Postal	Mailing Address
Av. Direitos Humanos Bidau Lecidere, Dili Tel. +670 390 321177 Telefone Celular – Mobile Phone:	Trav. Bidau Lecidere Dili Tel. +670 390 322 308 +61 418 890 141	Caixa Postal n. 4 Dili, Timor Oriental Facsimile:	GPO Box 4 Dili, East Timor

22 June, 2000

Ref. Nº. :

Subject : Artificial methods of Family planning

Attention : The Honorable Head
Department of Public Health
UNTAET HEAD OFFICE
Dili, East Timor

Dear Sir or Madam,

Greetings of love and Peace!

I would like to bring to your kind notice the following points and request for immediate action.

It has been brought to my attention by our priests working in different areas in the diocese that in many districts, authorities from the department of Public Health are promoting various methods of artificial family planning like distributing condoms and abortion pills etc to our people.

1. Recalling the fact that Catholic Church disapproves and disagrees completely with the use of various methods of artificial family planning to be adopted by her followers even in an extreme therapeutic case, I like to quote from my previous pastoral letters:

   a) "..According to the dignity of every Christian because of the marriage bond itself, we have to stress once again that all methods of family planning which interrupt the process of birth which has been started especially abortion either direct or attempted even for therapeutic reasons are totally unacceptable. Likewise, sterilization either permanent or temporary has to be avoided by husband and wife. Also every action or interruption whether it is previous to or during the time of intimate relationship between husband and wife to prevent the begetting of offspring should be avoided (Cf. No. 3 of the Pastoral letter of Bishop Belo on 26 April 1984).

   b) According to the teaching of Magisterium, it is morally right to use methods of natural family planning to plan the size of each family (Humanae Vitae. 16). The stand of the Church in East Timor in this regard is crystal clear in my pastoral letter of March 3, 1985. In line with the teachings of Humanae Vitae No. 16, the Church in East Timor reaffirms that:

- Every action that directly interferes the generative process especially abortion either direct or attempted even for therapeutic reasons is totally unacceptable and should be avoided.
- All methods of sterilization either permanent or temporary carried out on husband or wife are also unacceptable and should be avoided.

- Every action that intends to prevent, make procreation or begetting of an offspring impossible, whether it is before or during the intimate relationship in the marriage or even during the process of natural growth of the offspring should be totally avoided.

2. Given the fact that 90 per cent of the East Timorese are Catholics, I like to recalling my letter dated 12 December 1984 to respect and promote Religious, ethnic and cultural identity of our people as these are inseparable part of the basic right of every human being. Once again, the Church would like to stress the point of respect for the "right of every peoples over their own destiny" (RH no. 17 pp.65).

Hence I would like to forward this letter on behalf of the East Timorese as their shepherd and spiritual leader expecting immediate action to put an end to unacceptable means of planning their family and thus to express explicit respect to the Religious, cultural and ethnic identity of our people.

With every good wish for your work,

Yours sincerely,

Timor Oriental
Diocese de Dili

Msgr. Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo SDB
Titular Bishop of Lorium
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dili

Copies to:
1. Head of Mission, ICRC, East Timor
2. Head of Mission, German Doctors for Develoment, East Timor
3. Head of Mission, Medicins Sans Frontieres-France, East Timor
4. Head of Mission, Medicins Sans Frontieres-Belgium, East Timor
5. Head of Mission, International Medical Corps., East Timor
6. Head of Mission, Medicins du Monde-France,East Timor
7. Head of Mission, Medicos do Mundo-Portugal, East Timor
8. Head of Mission, OIKOS (Portugal), East Timor
9. Program Manager, Oxfam, East Timor
10. Director, Timor Aid, East Timor
11. Director, Caritas Australia, East Timor
12. Director, Caritas Dili, East Timor
13. Head of Mission, World Vision, East Timor
14. Head of Mission, Action Contre la Faim, East Timor
15. Head of Mission, Alliance of Friends for East Timor, East Timor
16. Head of Mission, Assistência Medica Internacional (Portugal), East Timor
17. Head of Mission, Aide Medicale Internationale (France)
18. Head of Mission, GOAL,, East Timor
19. Head of Mission, Health Alliance International,, East Timor
20. Head of Mission, Associação Saude Em Portuguese, East Timor
21. Head of Mission, Medicins Sans Frontieres-Holland, East Timor
22. Head of Mission, Merlin, Pantai kelapa, Dili
23. National Representative, SHARE, Perumnas, Bairopite, Dili